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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KUWAIT 000972

SIPDIS

NEA/ARP, NEA/I, OSD-DPMO FOR LTC BILL THOMAS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/04/2019
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [MARR](#) [PGOV](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: TSC APPLAUDS RECENT IRAQI EFFORTS TO RECOVER
MISSING KUWAITI REMAINS

REF: A. KUWAIT 354
[1](#)B. KUWAIT 959
[1](#)C. KUWAIT 779
[1](#)D. KUWAIT 566
[1](#)E. KUWAIT 587

Classified By: Political Counselor Pete O'Donohue for reasons 1.4 b and
d

Summary

[1](#)1. (U) The ICRC opened the 62nd session of the Tripartite Commission's Technical Subcommittee (TSC) October 6 with praise for recent efforts by Iraq's Ministry of Human Rights (MOHR) to advance the search for missing Kuwaitis from the 1990 Iraqi invasion. Echoing these plaudits, the Kuwaiti delegation commended the Iraqis for undertaking a media campaign to solicit eyewitness accounts, pursuing eyewitness leads, and excavating potential mass grave sites near Kerbala. The next Chiefs of Mission Tripartite Commission (TC) meeting will take place on November 18, but the venue remains TBD. Highlights of the meeting follow. End summary.

GOI Public Information Campaign

[1](#)2. (U) Iraqi Ministry of Human Rights (MOHR) representative Arkan Thamer Saleh reported to the TSC that his ministry published in Iraqi newspapers on August 16 the names and photographs of the approximately 370 Kuwaitis still missing. Accompanying the advertisements were hotline numbers and website addresses for contacting relevant GOI agencies. Though the effort so far has yielded no positive leads, Kuwaiti delegation leader Dr. Ibrahim Al-Shaheen lauded the GOI for dedicating resources to discover the missing Kuwaitis.

Excavating Kerbala III

[1](#)3. (U) Saleh also reported that the MOHR, using military maps provided by Embassy Baghdad, began excavating some 27 potential mass grave sites near Kerbala on September 28. He stated that teams have been putting in twelve-hour days since that date, digging to depths of 3-4 meters in search of mortal remains. In response, Kuwaiti delegation leader Al-Shaheen recommended digging to 12 meters, noting it was at such a depth that remains were found in previous successful excavations. The TSC noted that, per ICRC protocol, the ICRC is to be notified and GOK forensics officials invited to participate in the exhumation procedures in the event that any remains believed likely to be Kuwaiti are discovered.

Ramadi Witness Brokering an Excavation?

14. (U) The TSC praised Saleh for his continued attempts to solicit actionable information from the so-called "Ramadi witness" since the last TSC. Saleh noted that, in the course of meetings with the witness both in Damascus and Baghdad, the witness acknowledged to MOHR officials that he did not personally have information on the locations of possible burial sites but was in contact with individuals who claim to have knowledge of three different mass grave sites containing as many as 100 bodies near Ramadi. These individuals fear being identified. Saleh said the witness, claiming to represent these individuals, requested security support to visit the sites and search for evidence of mass burials. The TSC urged Saleh and MOHR to follow-up this lead. TSC officials urged that Kuwaiti forensics experts be notified and provided an opportunity to visit the area and conduct a full investigation in the event that preliminary searches prove fruitful.

Old Maps for New Digs

15. (U) The British delegation reported that it recently received from London copies of the maps used by British forces who buried Iraqi KIA in the retreat from Kuwait during the Gulf War. (Note: Ref A details the Embassy initiative that encouraged the GOK to search for these remains and how it inspired greater effort from the GOI. End note). Embosffs will calibrate GPS devices to these maps and, noting pre-existing landmarks, venture out with the ICRC into the desert on October 24 to mark potential burial sites for excavation.

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TC Set for November 18. Venue TBD

16. (C) ICRC announced November 18 as the date for the next TC, but the venue remains TBD. The Saudi delegation noted that it had sought the advice of FM Prince Saudi regarding Iraq's offer to host the next TC in Baghdad (ref B), but the Saudis still have not confirmed their preferences on the venue.

Other Items

17. (U) Other discussions focused on:

-- Repatriation of Remains. The Kuwaiti delegation announced that it had examined bone fragments previously provided by the GOI, and upon confirming that they did not belong to Kuwaitis, will return them to the GOI in an ICRC-brokered transfer by the end of 2009.

-- Revisit Survivor Accounts. Based on the improved security situation and collegiality of the effort, TSC delegates assessed that witnesses might be more forthcoming than in past outreach attempts. Pursuing accounts, the TSC requested that Kuwaiti National Committee for Missing and POW Affairs (NCMPA) review its files for the accounts of survivors in hopes that they might contain information useful in identifying captors or military units involved in transfer and/or executions of captives.

18. (C) Comment: The overall tone of the October 8 TSC was positive and reflects continuing momentum in recent months, a refreshing change from the moribund sessions of past years. Tellingly, both Kuwait and Iraq are utilizing the TSC as an area in which the sometimes difficult overall bilateral relationship can get a positive boost.

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